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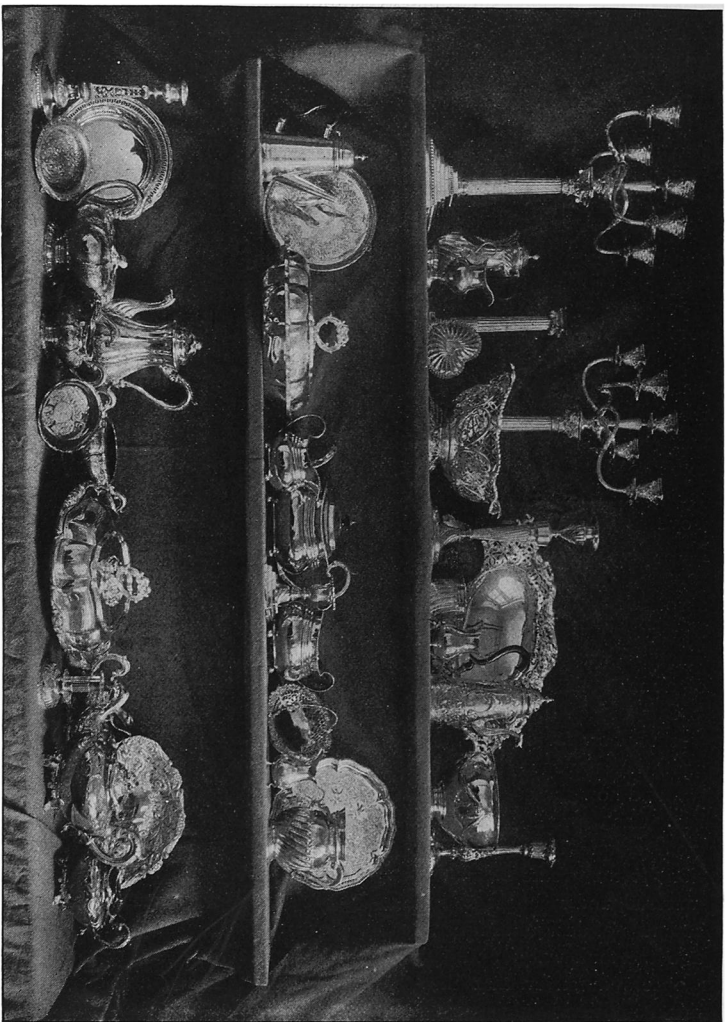
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MODERN SILVERWARE.

THERE is no necessity to pierce the mists of antiquity and point out how thousands of years ago silver was moulded into all manner of utensils, especially those which had a part in the religious rites of both civilized and barbarian eras. The history of the ancient Hebrews, of the æsthetic Greeks, and of the conquering Romans fully bears out this fact; the discoveries of Schliemann on the site of the ancient city of Troy showing that the art of casting silver, and metals in general, was in common use in the days of Homer. If we come down nearer our own time and among people speaking our own language, we shall find that in England silver plate and vessels were first used by Wilfrid, a Northumbrian bishop, a lofty and an ambitious man, in the year 709, and that in the same country silver knives, spoons, and cups were great luxuries in 1300. In the centuries following, until the reign of Elizabeth, silver was chiefly used for communion cups and plate in churches. During the last year of the reign of Edward VI. (1553) there was a spoliation of parish church goods, but on Mary's accession in July

of the same year the plate which the royal commissioners had taken was restored to the churches, although much of it disappeared during the Elizabethan crusade against "monuments of superstition." The manufacture of silver in the Elizabethan period was in its method very rude. The make and ornamentation were peculiar, and in many cases the hammer seems to have been the chief tool employed. When we come, however, to the eighteenth century, we reach a period which may be said to have been the beginning of a new era, whether in art or in literature, and one which, for want of a better term, we often style "classical." In many ways we have not improved upon the products of that age, and they still remain to us marvels in the originality of their design and the simplicity and yet massiveness of their decoration. Neither has there been, looking at the matter from a purely commercial point of view, any time when silver was more valuable than during what is known as the "Britannic" period. Many persons, when they see the figure of Britannia and the lion's head erased, in the place of the familiar lion



ORIGINAL, EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH SILVER, COLLECTED BY MESSRS. BAILEY, HANES & BIDDLE, AND SHOWN IN THEIR ART ROOM.

passant and leopard's head, think that plate bearing such marks must be of base metal, whereas it is purer by eight pennyweights in the pound than any other silver. The standard for silver plate was raised in 1696-97 above that of the coin of the realm, in order to prevent the melting down of the coin for the purpose of making plate, and new marks were appointed for the new standard, which ceased to be compulsory in 1720, chiefly because plate of the new or higher standard was found to be less durable than that of the old or lower, which, being restored in 1720, has continued ever since, though not to the total exclusion of the new. Lovers of eighteenth-century plate, therefore, can satisfy themselves that, independently of its associations and of its æsthetic beauty, it possesses an intrinsic value, viewed simply in the light of a marketable commodity.

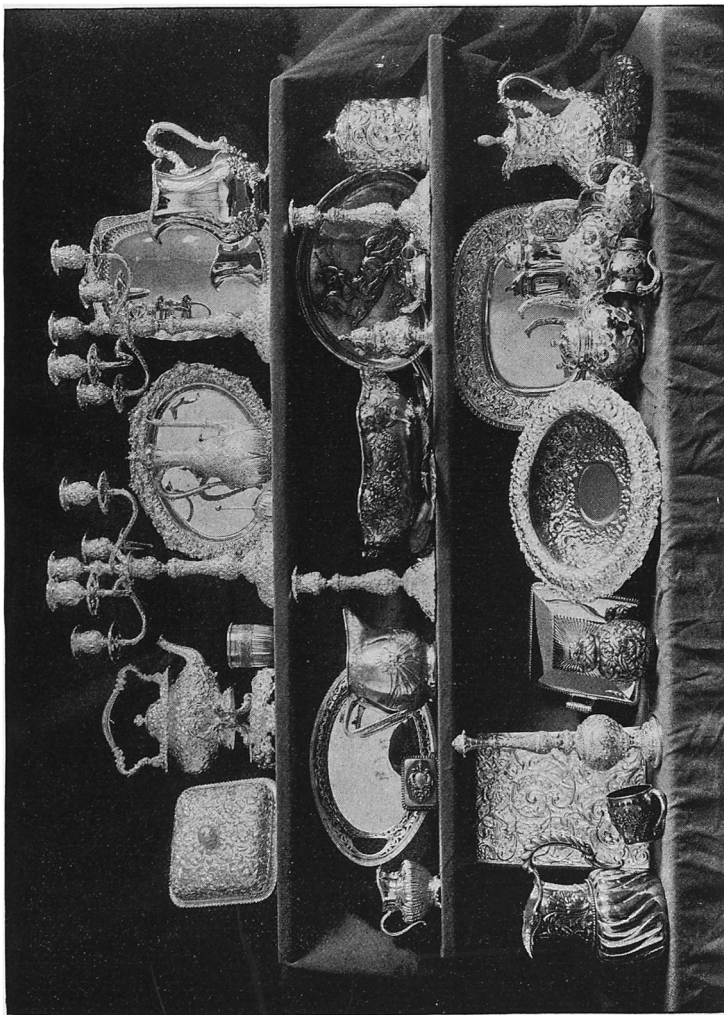
Our object, however, is rather to show how the art of the silversmith has advanced in our country, and how the current of progress has spread and widened from simple forms and decorations to the greatest perfection of material, and richness and elaborateness of design. Fifteen years ago the fault was found with our workers in silver that they had not a sufficiently high standard of design, that their goods lacked

simplicity and soberness of decoration, and that more attention to outlines and beauty of form was desirable. There was too much suggestion of traditional styles and a kind of machine-work about it that was monotonous. This, however, was no doubt partly due to the fact that at the period in question much of the ware which was made up for either practical or ornamental purposes was of a cheap character, and it was thought that the coarse and meretricious in design or in execution was sufficient to satisfy the demands of the uncultured. But it was soon found that the days of Sheffield and Birmingham workshops were over, that ornamentation must have significance, and that a jumble of incongruous materials without originality, unity, or elegance would soon pall upon the most common taste, when that taste began to undergo a process of development under the stimulating wealth of suggestion and educational influences. It is not, of course, likely that we shall ever forswear our allegiance to the early English and the classical. But within the past decade we have made marvellous progress; more than Italy ever did during the same time, with the example and guidance of a Benvenuto Cellini, or Western Europe with a Palissy, the famed enameller of

Limoges. Our discoveries in science, by their application to practical art, have been made the common possession of the people, and have given to society at large the enjoyments and luxuries which were once the exclusive privilege of kings and nobles. We have spread far and wide the civilizing influences of art, and have brought the masses of the people up to the aristocratic standard of grace and enjoyment, and so diffused the influence of beauty over all minds.

Of this age it may be said that it is essentially a practical one. Whenever intelligence is widely diffused, this characteristic is found. In mediæval times, when knowledge was the possession of only a few, there was no opportunity for great minds to impress the mass of the people with themselves or with their work; and so they retired within themselves and gave up their lives to patient and inexhaustible labor, which found its outcome in some marvellously-painted missal, or some wondrous design in gold and silver, which should live through all the centuries as a monument of genius. To-day the stimulus of education has not only aided the development of art, and insisted on the highest possibilities of workmanship, but has declared for practical character as well as artistic detail. And

with this practicality there has come, in many branches of manufacture, especially in that of silverware, an increased beauty of line and form. Much outlay is necessary to make fresh patterns, and in England to-day there are but few, and these made mostly in solid silver, while our manufacturers furnish a great variety of their own designs in all classes of goods, whether for domestic use or for table and cabinet decoration. Whatever may be the sentiment embodied in it, articles of silver have been the most generally selected for wedding presents. But the objects themselves, as well as the manner in which they were designed, were, until a few years ago, thoroughly conventional, and so limited in variety that the recipients were apt to be overburdened with one particular article. Now, however, every phase of taste can find something through which to express itself, from the simplest production of the designer's skill up to what are veritable art-pictures. While our art-museums do not yet compare with those of Europe in the number of examples for study and repetition, there is a romance and a vitality about our history which suggest manifold subjects for illustration, and it is to the credit of our artist-designers that they are producing so much that



DISPLAY OF AMERICAN SILVERWARE IN PREVAILING STYLES BY BAILEY, BANKS & HIDDLE.

does not depend for its inspiration upon mythology or mediæval history, but represents the reality of nineteenth-century life. It may be true that in common with Europe we have gained much from the study of the art-processes of Eastern nations; but we have also shown great adaptability in the manner in which we have improved on old methods, and have given an air of greater lightness and grace to many objects, while not interfering with the cardinal principle involved in their production. Many articles of silver which are in daily use were at one time deemed not to be perfect unless they were large and heavy. Increased taste and experience have shown that the lines of beauty can be retained without making the object weighty and ponderous, and that the more delicate the tracery and the freer the design, the more is the production in harmony with the material out of which it has been fashioned.

This excellence of decoration, this delicacy of treatment, is noticeable not only in articles for personal use and adornment, but also in those larger objects which are intended to gratify the taste for household decoration, to commemorate some great event, or to symbolize some act of wisdom or benevolence or some

deed of prowess. The numerous processes which are now utilized in the manufacture of objects in silver have all tended towards making the skill of the designer appear in a new and fresh light. The very methods which are used to reproduce some great painting in a form in which all its beauties can be preserved are utilized in improving designs in silver. Thus, we have etching, repoussé or chased work, and appliqué work, each of which adds to the general effect of the ornament and to the quality of color and finish. The love of out-door sports which is entering so largely into the life of the people, and is recognized even by the wisest and most conservative educators as an aid to intellectual culture, has stimulated our native designers to efforts at expressing in durable and artistic form the success which has been achieved by individuals or organizations. The result is that instead of the traditional medal or cup, stereotyped in form and suggestive of the most ordinary mill-work, we have a plentitude of designs, each of which bears an artistic relation to the event sought to be commemorated. Nor are the possibilities of such work exhausted: each fresh design stimulating thought and suggesting some new idea which deft and patient fingers and the artistic eye are sure to work out

in new lines of beauty. This individuality, which is showing itself so prominently in silver-work, is a matter of gratification to all who are possessed of an artistic taste, and that it will be maintained need not for a moment be doubted. The Japanese have always been recognized as adepts in alloy, and in applied decorative combinations of gold, silver, and copper incrustations. Our own silversmiths have now found the secret, and silver can be applied to ivory, to wood, and to leather, thus delighting the eye by an ingenious management of particulars. There is, in fact, hardly anything which enters into practical use that does not now appear in silver with the qualities of symmetry and mechanical perfection. To the products of the eighteenth century we can always turn with admiration for their beauty and historical associations; but those of to-day claim a larger place in our esteem for the blending of the practical with the æsthetic, and the promise which they give of further development and a wider growth in national art.

JOHN V. HOOD.

GOOD-NIGHT.

Lo! The parting of the ways,
 Where the Day
 With a million rosy rays
 Blushes, while she hides her face,
 With delight:
 Nay, weeps tears divinely bright:
 Weeps, because she must away
 From the sudden sweet embrace,
 From the glory and the grace
 Of the Night.

Lo! The parting of the ways!
 Love, Good-night!
 Ah! the demon of that phrase
 Even kisses by the score
 Cannot slay;
 Therefore let us haste away
 And let Slumber's magic sleight
 On our souls oblivion pour,
 Till we may, dear Love, once more
 Say Good-day.

HENRY W. AUSTIN.